

23 May 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Medical Services

FROM:

Chief, Center for Counterterrorism and
Crisis Response

SUBJECT: Stress of Overseas Assignment

1. As you are aware, our Staff has been involved in preparing people for overseas assignments in the context of the increasing threat of international terrorism. In this work we have dealt with both new and experienced employees from all Directorates. During and following crises, we have had the opportunity to observe the reactions of a number of involved individuals. TDY travel has allowed us to observe personnel in a number of stations around the world.

2. The increasing hostility to Americans abroad, and particularly to US government officials, has increased the level of anxiety among both employees and their families. Specifically, the threat of violence has become more generalized and unpredictable. No longer is it sufficient to calculate the risk to oneself or one's family in terms of a known enemy; real sources of danger include terrorists, criminals, and mobs, all of which can occur, it seems, at any time and at any place. At the same time, there is the perception (real or imagined) that the USG is less able and/or less willing to afford adequate protection to its employees, viz. increased dependence on inadequate host government resources, apparent ambiguous policy statements, etc. In many cases employees successfully employ denial in dealing with this stress for themselves, but their problems become all too apparent in their concerns for their families.

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